

**CH-507**  
**Bernard W. Downs House**  
**Bryans Road**  
**Private**

**circa 1899**

Located on a 15-acre parcel on the northwest side of Indian Head Highway (MD Route 210), the Bernard W. Downs House was erected circa 1899. As originally built, the house consisted of a 2-story frame Victorian I-house with an original rear "ell." The interior is organized around a stair hall with two parlors flanking the central hall. Once three bays wide and one room deep, a 1-bay, 2-story extension was added to the south end circa 1920. A centered gable, typical of Victorian-era buildings in rural Charles County, adorns the facade. Although its original form remains visible, the house has been significantly altered over the years.

The Downs House was erected circa 1899 by Bernard Washington Downs, a member of a local family that settled in the area around 1800.<sup>1</sup> The house was erected on a portion of an old estate known as Market Overton (see CH-56). Although altered in detail, the building's form is typical of Victorian I-houses of the turn of the 20th century in Charles County.

---

<sup>1</sup> Information on Downs/Halley families retained from Joan D. Hedges, current owner. Interviewed by author, August 1998.

MARYLAND HISTORICAL TRUST  
MD INVENTORY OF HISTORIC PROPERTIES

Inventory No. CH-507

=====

1. Name of Property

=====

historic name Bernard W. Downs House

common/other name \_\_\_\_\_

=====

2. Location

=====

street & number 2900 Camp Hedges Place not for publication \_\_\_\_\_  
city or town Bryans Road vicinity X state Maryland code MD  
county Charles code 017 zip code 20616

=====

3. State/Federal Agency Certification

N/A

=====

4. National Park Service Certification

N/A

=====

5. Classification

=====

Ownership of Property (Check all that apply)

X private  
\_\_\_\_\_ public-local  
\_\_\_\_\_ public-State  
\_\_\_\_\_ public-Federal

Category of Property (Check only one box)

X building(s)  
\_\_\_\_\_ district  
\_\_\_\_\_ site  
\_\_\_\_\_ structure  
\_\_\_\_\_ object

Number of Resources within Property

Contributing      Noncontributing

<u>3</u>	<u>2</u>	buildings
<u>0</u>	<u>0</u>	sites
<u>0</u>	<u>0</u>	structures
<u>0</u>	<u>0</u>	objects
<u>3</u>	<u>2</u>	Total

Is this property listed in the National Register?

Yes \_\_\_\_\_ Name of Listing \_\_\_\_\_

No X

MARYLAND INVENTORY OF HISTORIC PROPERTIES  
CONTINUATION SHEET

Inventory No. CH-507

=====

6. Function or Use

=====

Historic Functions (Enter categories from instructions)

Cat: DOMESTIC Sub: Single Dwelling  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

Current Functions (Enter categories from instructions)

Cat: DOMESTIC Sub: Single Dwelling  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

=====

7. Description

=====

Architectural Classification (Enter categories from instructions)

Vernacular Victorian I-house  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

Materials (Enter categories from instructions)

foundation solid: concrete simulated stone  
roof side gable: asphalt shingles  
walls frame: concrete simulated stone cladding  
other \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

Narrative Description (Describe the historic and current condition of the property.)

See Continuation Sheet No. 7-1

MARYLAND INVENTORY OF HISTORIC PROPERTIES  
CONTINUATION SHEET

Inventory No. CH-507

=====

8. Statement of Significance

=====

Applicable National Register Criteria (Mark "x" in one or more boxes for the criteria qualifying the property for National Register listing)

- ☐ A Property is associated with events that have made a significant contribution to the broad patterns of our history.
- ☐ B Property is associated with the lives of persons significant in our past.
- ☒ C Property embodies the distinctive characteristics of a type, period, or method of construction or represents the work of a master, or possesses high artistic values, or represents a significant and distinguishable entity whose components lack individual distinction.
- ☐ D Property has yielded, or is likely to yield information important in prehistory or history.

Criteria Considerations (Mark "X" in all the boxes that apply.)

- ☐ A owned by a religious institution or used for religious purposes.
- ☐ B removed from its original location.
- ☐ C a birthplace or a grave.
- ☐ D a cemetery.
- ☐ E a reconstructed building, object, or structure.
- ☐ F a commemorative property.
- ☐ G less than 50 years of age or achieved significance within the past 50 years.

MARYLAND INVENTORY OF HISTORIC PROPERTIES  
CONTINUATION SHEET

Inventory No. CH-507

=====  
Areas of Significance (Enter categories from instructions)

ARCHITECTURE  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

Period of Significance circa 1899  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

Significant Dates circa 1899  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

Significant Person (Complete if Criterion B is marked above)  
\_\_\_\_\_

Cultural Affiliation Undefined  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

Architect/Builder Unknown  
\_\_\_\_\_

Narrative Statement of Significance (Explain the significance of the property.)

See Continuation Sheet No. 8-1

=====

9. Major Bibliographical References

=====

(Cite the books, articles, legal records, and other sources used in preparing this form.)

Brown, Jack D., et al. *Charles County, Maryland, A History*. Charles County Bicentennial Committee, 1976.

Charles County Land Records, Charles County Courthouse, La Plata, Maryland.

Klapthor, Margaret Brown. *The History of Charles County, Maryland*. La Plata, MD: Charles County Tercentenary, Inc., 1958.

=====

10. Geographical Data

=====

Acreage of Property 15 acres

**Verbal Boundary Description (Describe the boundaries of the property.)**

The property at 2900 Camp Hedges Place is designated as Parcel 81 on Map 5, Grid 18 on the Charles County Property Map.

**Boundary Justification (Explain why the boundaries were selected.)**

The dwelling at 2900 Camp Hedges Place has been associated with Parcel 81, Map 5 since its construction in circa 1899.

=====

11. Form Prepared By

=====

name/title Kathryn Gettings Smith, Architectural Historian  
 organization Charles County Planning Dept. date Oct.15,1998  
 street & number P.O. Box B telephone 301-645-0689  
 city or town La Plata state MD zip code 20646

=====

12. Property Owner

=====

name Joan D. & Elvan A. Hedges  
 street & number 2900 Camp Hedges Place telephone 301-375-8648  
 city or town Bryans Road state MD zip code 20616

=====

MARYLAND INVENTORY OF HISTORIC PROPERTIES  
CONTINUATION SHEET

Inventory No. CH-507

Section 7 Page 1

Bernard W. Downs House  
name of property  
Charles County, Maryland  
county and state

=====

Located on a 15-acre parcel on the northwest side of Indian Head Highway (MD Route 210), the Bernard W. Downs House was erected circa 1899. As originally built, the house consisted of a 2-story frame Victorian I-house with an original rear "ell." The interior is organized around a stair hall with two parlors flanking the central hall. Once three bays wide and one room deep, a 1-bay extension was added to the south end circa 1920. A centered gable, typical of Victorian-era buildings in rural Charles County, adorns the facade. Although its original form remains visible, the house has been significantly altered over the years.

The house is located on a level 15-acre parcel extending northwest off Indian Head Highway near Bryans Road. The building is approached by a long gravel driveway and is surrounded by a chainlink fence. Several mature trees surround the house and wooded areas border the open lot on the north, south and west.

The dwelling stands on a solid concrete foundation and is clad in a simulated stone veneer. Its roof consists of an open-eaved cross gable covered in asphalt shingles. The eaves terminate in cornice returns on the west gable end of the rear "ell." Two chimneys, one original and one addition, pierce the roof line. When built, the house was clad with wood German siding which was covered in the 1970s with a "Formstone" veneer. As seen in a historic photo taken between 1902 and 1920, the dwelling was originally fronted by a full-width half-hipped porch that featured decorative scroll-sawn brackets. In addition, the photo shows that prior to the circa-1920 south-end extension, a 2-story three-sided bay adorned the south gable end of the house.

The house originally had double-hung wood sash with two vertically divided lights in each sash. These have since been replaced throughout with 1/1 metal double-hung sash windows. In addition the front and side porches have been enclosed with frame walls and jalousie windows on the front and 1/1 metal sash on the side. The facade is organized around four bays, one being the once-centered, single-leaf, 1-light wood door. Two bays extend south of this entry and one to the north. Each bay contains a single replacement window. Similar replacement window bays, vertically aligned with those below, occupy the second story of the facade. The facade composition is crowned by a decorative gable aligned with the main entrance below.

The remainder of the dwelling is pierced by original window openings filled with replacement sash. A single-leaf multi-light

MARYLAND INVENTORY OF HISTORIC PROPERTIES  
CONTINUATION SHEET

Inventory No. CH-507

Section 7 Page 2

Bernard W. Downs House  
name of property  
Charles County, Maryland  
county and state

=====

wood door opens into the south side porch, while no openings pierce the north gable end. A stove flue clad in "Formstone" was added at the northwest intersection of the main block and the rear "ell." A turn-of-the-20th-century frame well house has been attached to the rear of the "ell" via a hyphen and converted for use as a bathroom. This small pyramidal-roof structure has fixed two light metal windows on two sides.

OUTBUILDINGS:

WORKSHOP:

A 1-story frame workshop with a side gable, asphalt clad roof stands approximately 100 feet northeast of the main house. The 1940s workshop features an interior corbeled cap brick chimney set along the ridge line and a 2-bay facade. The original entry holds a panel-and-light wood door, and the windows contain 6/6 double-hung wood sash. The building has been reclad with a veneer of concrete simulated stone.

SHED:

A 1-story frame shed partially clad in corrugated plastic stands to the south of the house. Its front gable configuration consists of an asphalt-covered roof extending into open eaves, a centered single-leaf gable end door, and a poured concrete foundation. Built circa 1920, the building's original use is not apparent.

GARAGE:

A 2-car 1970s frame garage stands southwest of the house and features a 1-story front gable design. One car bay has been enclosed and converted into a single-leaf entry. The building is clad with a simulated stone concrete veneer and covered in an asphalt shingled roof.

GARAGE/MAINTENANCE SHOP:

A large frame garage facility for bus maintenance stands in the southwest corner of the property. The building is of similar construction as the small two car garage. Also built in the 1970s, the building consists of a large side gable section with a small side gable wing extending off its east end. Clad in "Formstone," the building features an asphalt shingle roof and a series of large



MARYLAND INVENTORY OF HISTORIC PROPERTIES  
CONTINUATION SHEET

Inventory No. CH-507

Section 7 Page 3

Bernard W. Downs House  
name of property  
Charles County, Maryland  
county and state

=====

auto bays across its south elevation.

MARYLAND INVENTORY OF HISTORIC PROPERTIES  
CONTINUATION SHEET

Inventory No. CH-507

Section 8 Page 1

Bernard W. Downs House  
name of property  
Charles County, Maryland  
county and state

=====

The Downs House was erected circa 1899 by Bernard Washington Downs, a member of a local family that settled in the area around 1800.<sup>1</sup> The house was erected on a portion of an old estate known as Market Overton (see CH-56). Although altered in detail, the building's form is typical of Victorian I-houses of the turn of the 20th century in Charles County.

As originally built, the Downs House was a prime example of vernacular Victorian architecture of the late 19th century. Its I-house form, center gable and Victorian decoration identify it as the house of an upper middle class family. Over the years, the house has been expanded and remodeled to reflect contemporary design trends. Little of the original Victorian detail remains visible on the exterior.

The property came into the hands of the Downs family in 1899 when Thomas F. and Bernard W. Downs purchased 10 acres of land on the west side of the public road from Pomonkey to Piscataway from Hattie and William Claggett. The Claggetts had acquired a 253-acre tract from Sarah E. Tubman in 1893. Bernard Downs constructed the present house on the site shortly after the purchase of the property. It is likely that he had completed it by the time he married Edith Halley in 1907. Bernard and Thomas continued to purchase adjacent land, acquiring another small parcel from the Claggetts in 1904, and an additional 2 acres from Elizabeth and Jerome Dixon in 1905. The house continues to be held by descendants of Bernard W. Downs, passing to the present owners, Bernard Downs's granddaughter and her husband, in 1957.

---

<sup>1</sup> Information on Downs/Halley families retained from Joan D. Hedges, current owner. Interviewed by author, August 1998.

MARYLAND INVENTORY OF HISTORIC PROPERTIES  
CONTINUATION SHEET

Inventory No. CH-507

Bernard W. Downs House  
name of property  
Charles County, Maryland  
county and state

=====

**HISTORIC CONTEXT:**

**Geographic Organization:** Western Shore

**Chronological/Development Period (s):**

Industrial/Urban Dominance, 1870-  
1930

**Prehistoric/Historic Period Theme (s):**

ARCHITECTURE

**RESOURCE TYPE(S)**

**Category:** Building

**Historic Environment:** Rural

**Historic Function (s):** DOMESTIC/Single dwelling

**Known Design Source:** Unknown

MARYLAND INVENTORY OF HISTORIC PROPERTIES  
CONTINUATION SHEET

Inventory No. CH-507

Bernard W. Downs House  
name of property  
Charles County, Maryland  
county and state

=====  
**Chain of Title:**

Parcels A & B:

1893: Sarah E. Tubman (wife of Benjamin D. Tubman) to Hattie R. & William T. Claggett  
253 acres of "Mulberry Grove" (once "Market Overton")  
Charles County Land Records  
Liber JST 5 Folio 609

Parcel A:

December 7, 1899: Hattie R. & William T. Claggett to Thomas F. & Bernard W. Downs  
\$100  
10 acres, Part of "Market Overton"  
Charles County Land Records  
Liber BGS 10 Folio 387

Parcel B:

December 17, 1904: Hattie R. & William T. Claggett to Thomas F. & Bernard W. Downs  
\$64.00  
Land adjacent to their other acreage (no size given)  
Charles County Land Records  
Liber FDM 16 Folio 138

Parcel C:

March 2, 1905: Elizabeth R. & R. Jerome Dixon to Thomas F. & Bernard W. Downs  
\$480  
2 acres  
Charles County Land Records  
Liber FDM 16 Folio 185

MARYLAND INVENTORY OF HISTORIC PROPERTIES  
CONTINUATION SHEET

Inventory No. CH-507

Bernard W. Downs House  
name of property  
Charles County, Maryland  
county and state

=====

August 24, 1957:

Edith H. Downs, widow to Joan D. &  
Elvan A. Hedges  
\$10  
24.4 acres on West side of the  
public road leading from Pomonkey to  
Marshall Hall  
Attained by grantor by will of  
Bernard Washington Downs, Charles  
County Register of Wills, Liber REC  
23, Folio 123  
Charles County Land Records  
Liber 131 Folio 549

# RESOURCE SKETCH MAP

10/98

CH-507

BERNARD W. DOWNS HOUSE  
CHARLES COUNTY, MD  
2900 CAMP HEDGES PL.  
BRYANS ROAD VIC.

→ N

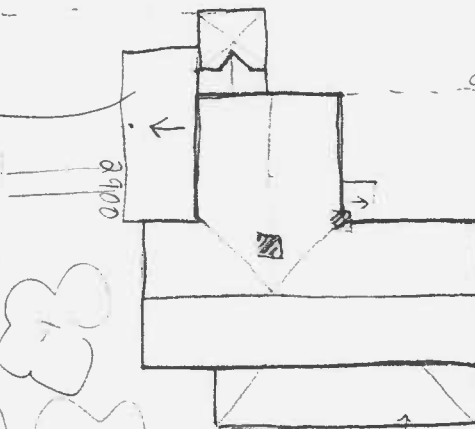


garage /  
maintenance shop



garage

1940s  
porch



chainlink fence

shed



carport



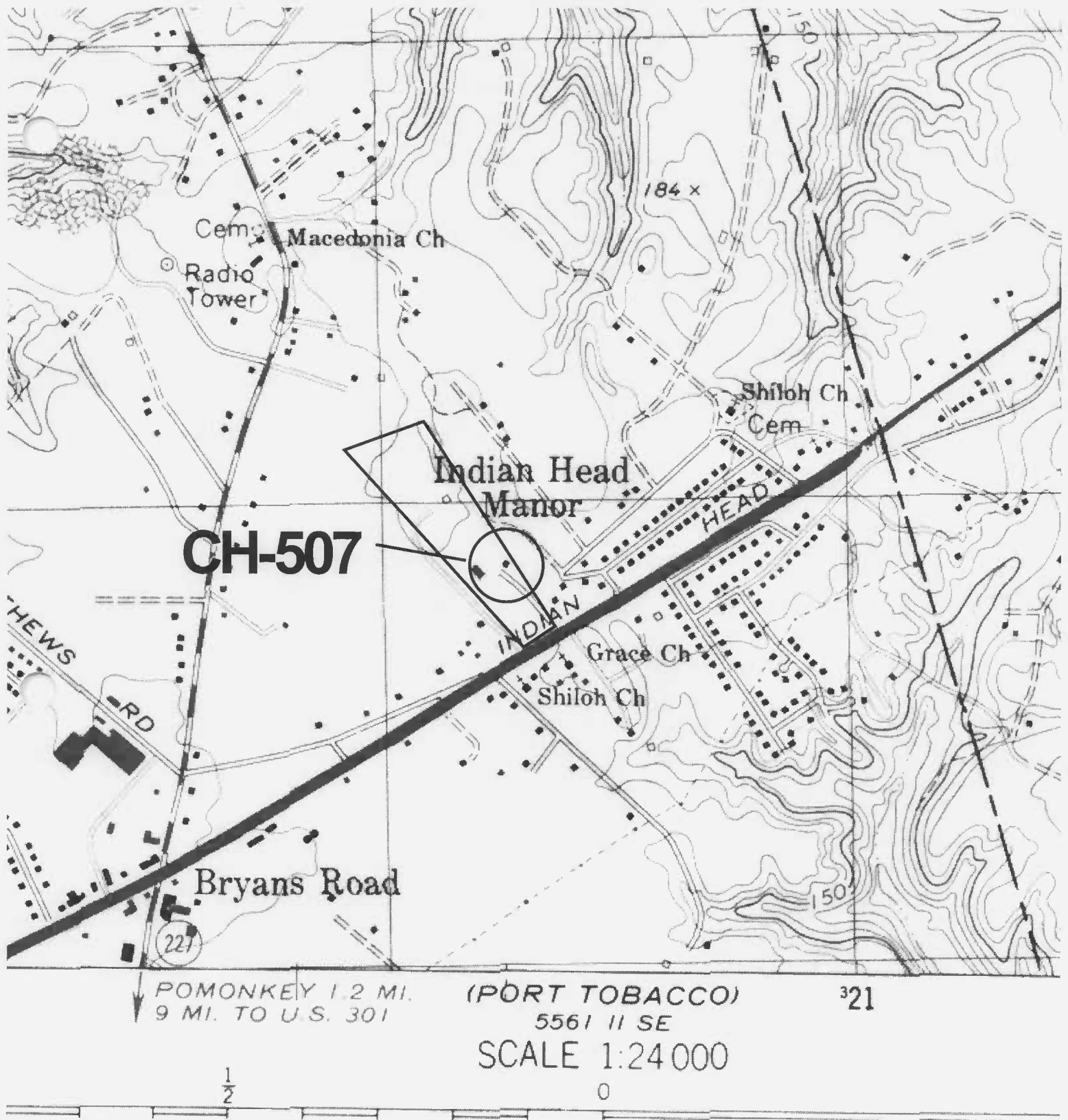
enclosed  
porch

open field



workshop

10 ft. 210  
ind. 11m 11 ft. 11 ft.



Bernard W. Downs House  
Charles County, MD

CH-507

MOUNT VERNON, MD-VA QUAD





CH-507

BERNARD W. DOWNS HOUSE

CHARLES COUNTY, MD

K.G. SMITH

8/98

MARYLAND SHPO

FACADE, LOOKING WEST

1 OF 9



CH-507

BERNARD W. DOWNS HOUSE

CHARLES COUNTY, MD

K.G. SMITH

8/98

MARYLAND SHPO

LOOKING SE

2 OF 9



CH-507

BERNARD W. DOWNS HOUSE

CHARLES COUNTY, MD

K.G. SMITH

8/98

MARYLAND SHPO

LOOKING EAST

3 OF 9



CH-507

BERNARD W. DOWNS +HOUSE

CHARLES COUNTY, MD

K.G. SMITH

8/98

MARYLAND SHPO

LOOKING NE

4 OF 9

Bless This House

1902

—

1920



1970

—

1971



CH-507

BERNARD W. DOWNS HOUSE

CHARLES COUNTY, MD

K.G. SMITH

8/98

MARYLAND SHPO

HISTORIC PHOTO TAKEN BETWEEN 1902 & 1920  
LOOKING NW

5 OF 9

# Blessing Church

1920 - 1910



Some added floor  
added on - Parkersburg in  
1911 - 2nd porch added on

1921 - 1915



1921 - 1921

Two windows

1921 - 1921



1921 - 1921  
Shower foot porch



CH-507

BERNARD W. DOWNS HOUSE

CHARLES COUNTY, MD

K.G. SMITH

8/98

MARYLAND SHPO

HISTORIC PHOTOS SHOWING EVOLUTION OF HOUSE  
BETWEEN 1902 & 1970S

6 OF 9



CH-507

BERNARD W. DOWNS HOUSE

CHARLES COUNTY, MD

K.G. SMITH

8/98

MARYLAND SHPO

WORKSHOP, LOOKING NORTH

7 OF 9



CH-507

BERNARD W. DOWNS HOUSE

CHARLES COUNTY, MD

K.G. SMITH

8/98

MARYLAND SHPO

SHED, LOOKING SW

8 OF 9





PH-507

BERNARD W. DOWNS HOUSE

CHARLES COUNTY, MD

K.G. SMITH

8/98

MARYLAND SHPO

L TO R: MAINTENANCE SHOP, GARAGE - LOOKING SW

9 OF 9